



The Augur

Journal of the Biblical Numismatic Society

9301 Wilshire Boulevard, Beverly Hills, California 90210-5499

*The opinions expressed herein represent those of the authors
and not of the B.N.S. or Superior Stamp and Coin Co.*

Mel Wacks, Editor

Ira Goldberg, Dr. Robert Webber & Robert Leonard, Contributing Editors

Published by Superior Stamp and Coin Company, Established in 1930

THE PROCURATOR FELIX

by Emil Schurer

At the request of the high priest Jonathan, one of the Jewish aristocracy whom Quadratus had sent to Rome, the Emperor Claudius transferred the administration of Palestine to one of his favourites, the brother of the influential Pallas, whose name was Felix (A.D. 52-60). This man's term of office constitutes probably the turning-point in the drama which had opened with A.D. 44 and reached its close in the bloody conflicts of A.D. 70. During the days of the first two procurators things had continued relatively quiet; under Cumanus, indeed, there were more serious uprisings of the people; yet even then they were only isolated and called forth by particular occurrences; under Felix rebellion became permanent.

He was, like his brother Pallas, a freedman of the imperial family, — a freedman probably of Antonia the mother of Claudius, and having therefore as his full name, Antonius Felix. The conferring of a procuratorship with military command upon a freedman was something unheard of, and is only to be accounted for by the influence which the freedmen had at the court of Claudius. As procurator of

Felix was three times married. All the three wives, of whom two are known to us, belonged to royal families. The one was a granddaughter of the triumvir Marc Antony and Cleopatra, and by this marriage Felix was brought into relationship with the Emperor Claudius. The other was the Jewish princess Drusilla, the daughter of Agrippa I and sister of Agrippa II; and the way in which the marriage with her was brought about serves to confirm the estimate of Tacitus quoted above. Drusilla at the time when Felix entered upon his office was fourteen years of age. Soon after this she was married by her brother Agrippa II to Azizus, king of Emesa, after the marriage with the son of King Antiochus of Commagene, to whom she had been before betrothed, had been broken off because he refused to submit to circumcision. Soon after her marriage Felix saw the beautiful queen, became inflamed with passion, and determined to possess her. By the help of a magician of Cyprus called Simon, he prevailed on her to marry him. In defiance of the law, which strictly forbade the marriage of a Jewess with a pagan, Drusilla gave her hand to the Roman procurator.

The public career of Felix was no better than his private life. As brother of the powerful and highly favoured Pallas, "he believed that he might commit all sorts of enormities with impunity." — It can be easily understood how under such a government as this the bitter feeling against Rome grew rapidly, and the various stages of its development were plainly carried out to the utmost extent under Felix and by his fault.

First of all, on account of his misgovernment the Zealots, who entertained so fanatical a hatred of the Romans, won more and more sympathy among the ranks of the citizens. How far Josephus had grounds for styling them simply robbers may remain undetermined. In any case, as their following from among the people shows, they were not robbers of the common sort; and their pillaging was confined wholly to the property of their political opponents. Felix, who was not very scrupulous about the means he used, contrived to get Eleasar, the head of the party, into his hands by means of treachery, and sent him, together with those of his adherents whom he had already in prison, to Rome. "But the number of the robbers whom he caused



Bronze Lepton issued by Felix in 54 A.D. is inscribed IOYAI AΓPIHINA (Julia Agrippina), wife of the Emperor Claudius, on obverse; two crossed palm branches are featured on the reverse along with the inscription TΙ KAAVΔIOC KAICAP ΓEPM (Tiberius Claudius Caesar Germanicus) and the date ΛΙΔ (Year 14 of Claudius' reign).

Palestine Felix proved worthy of his descent. "With all manner of cruelty and lust he exercised royal functions in the spirit of a slave;" in these words Tacitus sums up his estimate of the man.



Second "mite" issued by Felix in 54 A.D. has crossed shields and spears surrounded by NEΠΩ KAI AV KAICAP (Nero Claudius Caesar), the infamous Nero – brother of the Emperor Claudius. The reverse features the familiar symbol of Judaea, the palm tree, inscribed BPIT KAI (Britannicus Caesar), son of Claudius; the date is LLD.

to be crucified was incalculable, as also that of the citizens whom he arrested and punished as having been in league with them."

Such preposterous severity and cruelty only gave occasion to still further troubles. In the place of the robbers of whom Felix had rid the country, the Sicarii made their appearance, a still more fanatical faction of the patriots, who deliberately adopted as their special task the removal of their political opponents by assassination. Armed with short daggers (*sicae*), from which they received their name, they mixed among the crowds especially during the festival seasons, and unobserved in the press stabbed their opponents (*i.e.* the friends of the Romans), and feigning deep sorrow when the deed was done, succeeded in thereby drawing away suspicion from themselves. These political murders were so frequent that soon no one any longer felt safe in Jerusalem. Among others who fell victims to the daggers of the Sicarii was Jonathan the high priest, who, as a man of moderate sentiments, was hated by the Sicarii as well as by the procurator Felix, whom he often exhorted to act more worthily in the administration of his office, lest he (Jonathon) should be blamed by the people for having recommended the emperor to appoint him governor. Felix wished to have the troublesome exhorter put out of the way, and found that this could be most simply accomplished by means of assassination, to which the Sicarii, although otherwise the deadly foes of Felix, readily lent themselves.

With these political fanatics there were associated religious fanatics "not so impure in their deeds, but still more wicked in their intentions." Advancing the claim of a divine mission, they roused the people to a wild enthusiasm and led the credulous multitude in crowds out into the wilderness, in order that there they might show them "the tokens foreshadowing freedom" – that freedom which consisted in casting off the Roman yoke and setting up the kingdom of God, or, to use the language of Josephus, in innovation and revolution. Since religious fanaticism is always the most powerful and the most persistent, Josephus is certainly right when he says that those fanatics and deceivers contributed no less than the "robbers" to the overthrow of the city. Felix also recognized clearly enough the dangerous tendency of the movement, and invariably broke in upon all such undertakings with the sword. – The most celebrated enterprise of this sort was the exploit of the Egyptian to whom Acts xxi. 38 refers. An Egyptian Jew who gave himself out for a prophet, gathered around him in the wilderness a great crowd of people, numbering, according to Acts, 4000, according to Josephus, 30,000, with whom he wished to ascend the Mount of Olives, because he pro-

mised that at his word the walls of Jerusalem would fall down and give them free entrance into the city. Then they would get the Roman garrison into their power and secure to themselves the government. Felix did not give the prophet time to perform his miracle, but attacked him with his troops, slew and scattered his followers or took them prisoners. But the Egyptian himself escaped from the slaughter and disappeared.

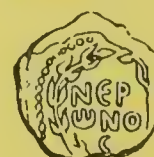
The result of this unfortunate undertaking was temporary strengthening of the anti-Roman party. The religious and the political fanatics united together for a common enterprise. "They persuaded the Jews to revolt, and exhorted them to assert their liberty, inflicting death on those that continued in obedience to the Roman government, and saying that such as willingly chose slavery ought to be forced from their desired inclinations; for they parted themselves into different bodies, and lay in wait up and down the country, and plundered the houses of the great men, and slew the men themselves, and set the villages on fire; and this till all Judea was filled with their madness."

Thus did the misgovernment of Felix in the end bring about this result, that a large portion of the people from this time forth became thoroughly roused, under the constant strain of this wild reign of terror, to wage war against Rome, and rested not until at last the end was reached.

In the last two years of Felix occurred also the imprisonment of the Apostle Paul at Caesarea, of which an account is given in Acts xxiii., xxiv. We are familiar with the story of the personal interview which the apostle had with the Roman procurator and his wife Drusilla, at which the apostle did not fail to speak to both of that which it was specially fit that they should hear: "of righteousness and of temperance, and of judgment to come."

While Paul lay a prisoner at Caesarea, a conflict arose there between the Jewish and Syrian inhabitants of the city over the question of equality in citizen rights. The Jews laid claim to the possession of certain advantages and privileges, since Herod was the founder of the city. The Syrians were naturally unwilling that any such preference should be given to the Jews. For a long time both parties fought with one another in riots on the public streets. At last on one occasion, when the Jews had obtained an advantage, Felix stepped in, reduced the Jews to order by military force, and gave up some of their houses to be plundered by the soldiers. But when, nevertheless, the disorders still continued, Felix sent the most prominent of both parties to Rome, in order that the question of law might be decided by the emperor. Before, however, the matter had been settled, Felix, probably in A.D. 60, was recalled by Nero.

Coin-of-the-Month



Last coin of Felix, struck in 58 A.D. features name of Emperor Nero (NEΠΩNOC) within wreath. Obverse depicts palm branch and inscription LE KAICAPOC (Year 5 of Caesar).

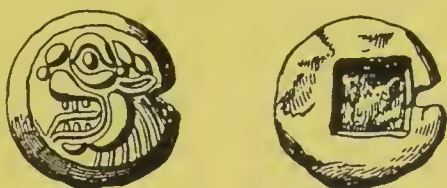
MONEY OF THE BIBLE

by William C. Prime

II. COINS AND COINAGE BEFORE THE CHRISTIAN ERA

Homer, our unfailing authority for the manners, customs, and equipments of the Achaeans in their age of semi-civilization, before their literature began to exist, tells us of the use of iron and copper as money. Plutarch (in "Lysander") suggests that early Greek money perhaps consisted of spikes or skewers of iron or of copper, from which fact a small coin was afterwards known as an *obolos*; that is, a "spike" or "skewer." Six of these spikes were a handful, or, in Greek, a *drachmic*. Hence came the Greek name of a coin, the *drachme*, which is one of importance in the history of Bible money.

The invention of coined money has been claimed for several Ionian and Lydian cities. It is quite certain that in one of them, not earlier than 800 B.C., and perhaps not before 700 B.C., the idea entered the mind of someone that it would be convenient, at least in small transactions, to have pieces of precious metal of uniform fineness and weight, stamped with some device which would be accepted as an authoritative certificate of quality and weight. The idea was adopted. The metal selected was an alloy of gold with silver called *electrum*. The art of engraving was ancient, having been practised from remote times in seal engraving in Babylonia and Egypt. The stamp of the seal on clay attesting public and private documents suggested the impression, on soft metal, of a device engraved in hard metal, answering the same purpose in attesting the character of the coin. The earliest known coins are literally lumps of electrum, having on one side the rude punch-mark and on the other side the engraved devices. There are several different devices on different early coins which have been found, all works of rude art. It cannot be affirmed which device belongs to which city. The accompanying illustration of one of these coins will give an idea of all of them.



Early electrum coin with lion's head on one side; the reverse has a punch mark.

The electrum alloy was soon abandoned, and gold took its place. Not long afterwards, and probably at Aegina, silver was first struck into coins. The advance in the art of coinage kept pace with the advance of Greek civilization and culture. The rough punch-mark, which was on all the earlier coins, was replaced by devices on reverse dies. The art spread from city to city, from state to state, the engravers' work rising to the dignity of sculpture, until, in the culmination of Greek art, various issues of the mints were superb medals and medalets; no more beautiful gems of engraving, ancient or modern, have ever been known.

These coins were not struck with minute attention to uniformity in weight. No collar was used around the planchet of metal to prevent spreading when squeezed between the dies. Hence coins showing the most exquisite art of the die-cutter were of irregular shapes, easily clipped or scraped on the edges. Approximation, but only approximation, to uniformity in weight was obtained. It was evidently understood that those who used the coins in trade would weigh them as used. The stamp was accepted as a certificate of the quality of the metal, but only of approximation in weight.

Copper was everywhere adopted as the metal for coins of inferior value, and was sometimes alloyed with a small quantity of zinc, making brass, and sometimes with a little tin, making bronze. In general, however, coins of all these qualities of metal are included under the Latin word *aes*. Very many different autonomous cities, states, and rulers in Europe, Asia, and on the islands, had independent mints. In the time of Alexander the Great, 336-323 B.C., when the Attic standard prevailed, there was more effort towards uniformity of coinage, and this standard went into Asia with the conqueror. Tyre, Sidon, Joppa, and other cities near Jerusalem minted Alexander's coins.

In the Greek coinage the principal gold coin was known as the *stater*, or standard, —a name which had been first given to the earliest electrum coin, and also to the *daric*. The principal silver coins were the *drachme*, the *didrachm*, or two *drachmas*, and the *tetradrachm*, or four *drachmas*. We shall find each of these coins mentioned in the New Testament.



Silver tetradrachm of Alexander the Great.

The Greeks also coined copper in various sizes, among which we find the *obolos*, which was the sixth part of a *drachme*, and the *lepton*, which was a very small coin, deriving its name from *leptos*, small. Its exact value cannot be stated, but it was probably the smallest coin known. This, too, is mentioned in the New Testament.

The silver tetradrachm was also known as a *stater*. Men probably distinguished the *staters* by calling one the gold *stater* and the other the silver *stater*.

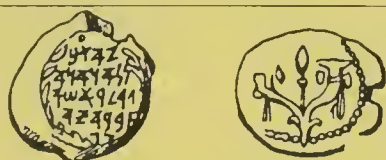
The Hebrews had as yet no coinage of their own. They had been taught to abhor idolatrous images of all kinds, and to avoid handling them. The coins of the Gentiles almost invariably bore images of men and of gods. They were not likely to obtain rapid circulation among strict obeyers of the Mosaic law as interpreted by the rabbis. But the Hebrews were never noted for resistance to the temptations of their idolatrous neighbors, and gold and silver have always been powerful tempters. The coins of Alexander and his successors, after his death and the division of the empire, as well as like coins of many kings and cities, came into Jerusalem in commerce, and in the

hands of pilgrims from all parts of the world. The temple tribute or offering of atonement, fixed in ancient days (Exod. 30: 13-15) at a half-shekel (by weight) continued payable, and every Hebrew, coming from whatever part of the world, paid it. It is not unlikely that the temple treasury, receiving the half-shekel of silver by weight, established the rate of exchange on foreign coins in Jerusalem.



The Shekel of Tyre was the standard coin for payment of the Jewish Temple Tax from 126 B.C. to the outbreak of the First Revolt in 66 A.D.

Simon Maccabeus' son and successor, John Hyrcanus, struck a small copper coin which apparently served the purpose of the Greek leptons. This was the beginning of a copper coinage which continued in Jerusalem until the revolt and destruction of the city. The series is interesting, but for our purpose it does not become necessary to describe it as it appeared under John Hyrcanus, Judah Aristobulus, Alexander Jannaeus, and other Asmonean rulers. Herod the Great continued it, and Herod Archelaus, and under the Roman procurators these small coppers were still issued to supply what was evidently a continuous want of the population in Jerusalem. I have called them small copper coins. They varied in size, and numismatists are puzzled to determine their relative value.



Copper coin of John Hyrcanus.



Copper coin of Herod the Great.

The hill Moriah, outside of the high city wall, slopes abruptly down to the valley or gorge of the Kedron. I have often searched the soil on this hillside for fragments of ancient ornamental stone and other relics, and have found there very many of these little copper coins. Most of them were worn or corroded so as to be mere thin pieces of metal; but many were good examples of the coinage of successive Asmonean rulers of Jerusalem, of the Herods, and of Roman procurators. Among these were several of the highest possible interest, as I shall have occasion to explain. I have no doubt that these small coins formed the chief circulation among the poor in Jerusalem, at least to the same extent that the para supplied the wants of the poor in Cairo a few years ago, and possibly continues so to do.

Ancient populations had no banks of deposit. The holder of gold, as well as the holder of copper, buried his hoard in the ground. The poor man dug a hole in the earth floor of his hut, and there placed his little lot of copper coins. He perhaps died suddenly, or was drafted into the army, or was killed by an invading enemy, perished without telling any one where he had banked his money, and therefore it remained for time and tempest to uncover it after ages had gone over it. This is the explanation of the preservation of many ancient coins. The gold staters of Philip and of Alexander the Great, found in such places of underground deposit, are more common to-day than any gold coin of the United States of the earlier issues.

Roman conquest brought Roman coin into the East, and further complication into the "circulating medium" in Jerusalem. No better idea of this can be obtained than by endeavoring to picture the scene in the temple, with its crowd of pilgrims and travelers of all nations and kingdoms, having silver coins of innumerable varieties in quality, weight, "image and superscription," besieging and disputing with a host of money-changers and market-men. Hebrews were now scattered in all parts of the known world, and came from their homes far and near to make offerings in the temple. Whatever coin they brought, even if Roman denarii from Rome itself, no two coins were of exactly the same weight. They could not use them had brought from the money-changer something which would pass current at the treasury. Nor could they buy so much as a dove with their coins. It is not difficult to imagine the confusion of voices, the free Oriental denunciations of brokers, buyers, and sellers, in this market-place, where the priests had arbitrary power to say what they would and what they would not receive as money, to fix rates of discount, to furnish privately to the dealers such coins as they would accept, and where the dealers had the ability to put their rates of exchange on every coin offered them.

— To be continued —

LOWEST PRICE EVER!

The B.N.S. celebrates its Sixth Anniversary by offering worn but absolutely genuine bronze leptons ("mites") struck in ancient Judaea about 2000 years ago by the Hasmoneans, Herodians, Procurators, etc., at the incredibly low price of

Only **\$7.50** each!

(Minimum order: 4 coins for \$30.00)

